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High-level ministerial segment and policy dialogue with heads of international organizations

Statement from the Ministerial Meeting on Forests convened by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on 14 March 2005 in Rome

Note by the Secretariat

At the Ministerial Meeting on Forests, convened by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on 14 March 2005, held in Rome in conjunction with the seventeenth session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, the following statement (see annex) was adopted by the 127 members of FAO with the request that it should be forwarded to the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

* E/CN.18/2005/1.

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Annex

Ministerial Meeting on Forests
STATEMENT
Rome, 14 March 2005

We, the Ministers responsible for forests or their representatives meeting in Rome, Italy, on 14 March 2005 at the Ministerial Meeting on Forests convened by the Director-General of FAO, to consider international cooperation on sustainable forest management including on forest fires,

recalling the importance and continuing relevance of and **reconfirming** our commitments to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Forest Principles and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD),

underscoring the multiple economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits and services provided by forests to people worldwide, in particular in nations where the importance of forests is crucial for their national development, and **re-emphasizing** the significant contribution of sustainable forest management to sustainable development, notably to poverty reduction, food security, energy and fibre supply, land productivity, rural development, water resources, conservation of biological diversity, countering global warming, maintenance of ecological services, protection of soils and combat of desertification, landscape restoration and, thus to the fulfillment of relevant commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals,

noting the importance of domestic forest law enforcement and governance and trade in legally harvested timber and forest products, thus contributing to sustainable forest management, and recognizing regional processes that have contributed to political will and commitment and identified capacity building needs,

welcoming the progress made to date at different levels on sustainable forest management, including the development and implementation of national forest programmes, criteria and indicators, voluntary codes of best practice, market based instruments and participatory and transparent approaches, as well as the establishment of public-private partnerships, notably the Asia Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the Mountain Partnership,

however **remaining deeply concerned,** despite progress made, over deforestation and forest degradation in many regions, as well as the trade in illegally harvested wood and non-wood forest products, including wildlife,

recognizing the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management which are drawn from the criteria identified by existing criteria and indicators processes and offer a reference framework for sustainable forest management, as acknowledged by the United Nations Forum on Forests at its fourth session,

expressing appreciation for the unprecedented assistance provided by the international community in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster of 26 December 2004, and **emphasizing** the critical need for long-term and collaborative efforts for forest-related rehabilitation of the affected areas and restoration of the protective functions of forests against natural disasters, in cooperation with the governments of affected countries,

stressing the need to strengthen political commitment to enhance communication, policy coordination, international and intersectoral cooperation at all levels, including with the private sector and civil society, between the forest sector and other sectors, including agriculture, nature conservation, trade, finance, transportation, energy, tourism and mining,

also emphasizing the need to accelerate the implementation of internationally agreed forest-related actions since UNCED and WSSD and, in doing so, to **recognize** the need of many developing countries and countries with economies in transition for new and additional resources, improved access to financial resources and for appropriate and environmentally sound technologies, as well as for training and technical cooperation to apply these effectively,

affirming the urgent need to improve the competitive status of sustainably managed forests,

recognizing the urgent need for international cooperation to assist developing countries to make the sustainable use of their natural forests economically viable and competitive,

underscoring that forests should be high on the global political agenda in order to accelerate the implementation of agreed actions on the ground and to enhance actions at all levels,

further noting the importance of the upcoming deliberations of the United Nations Forum on Forests at its fifth session in May 2005,

also underscoring the need for greater attention on forest fires in the context of sustainable development, recognizing that while fire is an important ecological process and land management tool, it can also have negative social, economic and environmental impacts and can contribute to forest degradation, thereby posing simultaneously a serious threat and challenge to sustainable forest management,

noting that effective fire management requires prevention, including public education, preparedness, suppression and recovery, and further **noting** that, while these are largely national responsibilities, there is an urgent need to bridge identified gaps in knowledge or technology and to strengthen international cooperation on forest fires,

stressing that sustainable forest management plays a key role in fire prevention, and fire prevention is a key component of sustainable forest management,

noting that the template for international cooperation in wildland fire management as presented at the International Wildland Fire Summit in Australia in 2003 offers an example which could be used by countries wishing to cooperate in this area,

emphasizing the need to avoid duplication of efforts in forest-related measures and actions,

recognizing that invasive species are having an increasing impact on forests in some regions and the need to have cooperative regional and international responses to this problem,

welcoming FAO's work on global forest information and monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests, including through the Global Forest Resources Assessment and the State of the World's Forests,

recognizing with appreciation the positive role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)[1] in support of UNFF, particularly in enhancing international collaboration and coordination on forest issues and in supporting country efforts towards sustainable forest management, and the need to strengthen CPF,

acknowledging the significant contribution of the National Forest Programme Facility, hosted by FAO, to the efforts in many developing countries to share knowledge, build capacity and implement internationally agreed forest-related actions, including Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) proposals for action,

we commit ourselves to further improving forest management and intersectoral cooperation in our respective countries and to enhancing regional, including continental, and international cooperation to achieve sustainable forest management worldwide.

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[1] **Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) member organizations:** Center for International Forestry Research; FAO (Chair); International Tropical Timber Organization; International Union of Forest Research Organizations; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility; Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests; Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; World Agroforestry Centre; World Bank; World Conservation Union.

We further commit ourselves

- to improve coordination of forest policies with economic, environmental and social policies in order to enhance the contribution of sustainable forest management to sustainable development and to the fulfillment of relevant commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals,
- to improve domestic forest law enforcement and governance and, to this end, promote international cooperation to support international trade in timber and forest products from legally harvested and sustainably managed forests,
- to enhance international cooperation on forest fires,
- to work together, in accordance with ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35, towards a constructive and effective fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests as a sign of our renewed commitment to sustainable forest management,
- to enhance FAO's leadership role in forests internationally, including through its continued leadership and facilitating role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests,
- to maintain and, where necessary, increase support at the national level for forest assessment and reporting and at the international level harmonize and streamline international reporting on forests.

To contribute to the efforts by our countries, we

call on FAO, in collaboration with countries and other international partners, including the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, to develop a strategy to enhance international cooperation on wildland fires, that advances knowledge, increases access to information and resources and explores new approaches for cooperation at all levels,

call on FAO to further develop studies and assist countries, upon request, in the design and implementation of projects on payment for environmental services from forests as well as in the assessment of the various benefits (water, carbon, biodiversity) of these projects,

request FAO to work with CPF members and other partners, including through public-private partnerships, to help countries build capacity for sustainable forest management and assist them to strengthen their legislation, policies, institutions and programmes, including education and training,

further request that this work include support for domestic programmes to prevent illegal harvest of wood and non-wood forest products, including wildlife,

call on FAO to continue its strong commitment to and leadership of CPF and, in this regard, to enhance its work with other international partners to strengthen coordination and communication between the global and regional levels, and to contribute to facilitating regional cooperation on sustainable forest management,

urge FAO to expand and enhance capacity building activities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to improve implementation of sustainable forest management on the ground,

urge FAO to further promote and apply integrated and cross-sectoral approaches in its programme of work to help achieve sustainable forest management and thereby contribute to sustainable development and to the fulfillment of commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including the internationally agreed development goals,

call on FAO to continue to work with other international organizations and to play a leading role to facilitate the international forest policy dialogue by clarifying the contribution of forests to sustainable development, and to provide high quality, easily accessible global information related to forests and sustainable forest management as reflected in the thematic elements of sustainable forest management and to provide forest-related inputs to the Millennium Review Summit, which will take place in September 2005,

call on FAO to take a leadership role and collaborate closely with other UN agencies, members of CPF and other partners in providing technical support and coordination for forest-related rehabilitation and restoration efforts in particular in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami,

call on FAO to provide inputs to the United Nations Forum on Forests at its fifth session in May 2005.

This Statement of the Ministerial Meeting on Forests was adopted on 14 March 2005 in the presence of ministers and senior officials from 127 Members: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, European Community, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.